

**Questions and Solutions:
The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions
for a Continuum of Services**

Session 6

**April 9-10, 2013
Hilton Short Pump Hotel
Richmond, Virginia
Sponsored by the
Virginia Department of Education
Office of Student Services**

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

6_Session_1_Breakout_1_2013_04_10.mp3

Break-out Session 1

10:00 am - Noon

Using a Balance Literacy Approach to Jump-Start Student Achievement

Anne O'Toole, Retired school principal
Chesterfield County Public Schools

00:00:00

Dr. Bowmaster: Okay we're going to go ahead and get started. Hopefully you're in the right session here, this is the Using a Balance Literacy Approach to Jump-Start Student Achievement. And our presenter is Anne O'Toole. Anne is the, is currently working with the Virginia Department of Education as a technical assistance provider working with schools in improvement. She also works with the assistant secretary of education in helping the five lowest performing schools in the state to do some turnaround services. Anne is a retired principal, during her tenure as principal her school earned national blue ribbon honor. It also was the first school in Virginia to become the National Expeditionary Learning School, she can talk about that. It was also, the school was recipient of the governor's award for educational leadership.

00:01:07

Dr. Bowmaster: Anne was also recognized as a distinguished educational leader, as a nominee for the RAB award, and then in Chesterfield County she was administrator of the year in 1999. So she's a graduate of William and Mary, also VCU with her Masters in education and an advanced certificate in educational administration. And she speaks French fluently huh?

Ms. O'Toole: I don't know about fluently, 30 years ago maybe. Now it's just bonjour.

Dr. Bowmaster: Oh okay, so I'm not gonna take up much more of our time so let's give Anne a round of applause.

Ms. O'Toole: Thank you Rick, I'm just delighted to be here with you this morning. This is going to really be a work session for you.

00:02:00

Ms. O'Toole: One of the things that struck me yesterday when I was chatting with the folks who were sitting at the table during the presentation of behavior, positive behavior management was that it is essential that the core that we are implementing in language arts, mathematics and behavior be of the highest quality. Because the core is what informs what we need to be doing with every single child. Even the children who are

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

most deficient and most in need of our support, so everybody should have a yellow handout. I, if you don't have that you're gonna need that, and so I don't know where more of them are. Are they out on that table where you register? But you've got to have that, everything I'm doing is in that. I'll tell you when I retired in June of 2011 we'd never used Apple computers in the school, I don't know if you all use them or not.

00:03:00

Ms. O'Toole: We'd always use Dells, and I thought I better get an Apple because Short Pump has this apple store and I don't know anything about anything. I'm not very smart with things like that, so I thought well there will be a little person there that can help me. Oh what a mistake that was, you know, first all they speak a whole different language and as a principal we have people who would show you how to do everything. But as a principal I had the authority or so I thought when they would come around and say, now Anne we're not supposed to do it for you, we're supposed to sit with you so you'll learn. And I would say look buddy I've got this and this and this. I'm coming back in an hour you better have this done, and I guess out of fear they would do it. So consequently I left, I retired, I knew nothing. My husband who is 83 doesn't even know how to turn on a computer, so that explains why you have a 25-page handout rather than a gorgeous PowerPoint.

00:04:01

Ms. O'Toole: I hope by the next time, this time next year I'll have learned how to do that. The good news is of course you probably see a lot of PowerPoints don't you? So maybe this is a throwback to old times. The first thing we are going to do, the most important thing that I want you to leave with today, I want you to have a good understanding of the components of, of best practices in a balanced literacy program. And that's just a fancy way of saying reading, writing, speaking, fluency and work-study. And I want you to be thinking as school system or school teams, because that's how you need to be sitting at this point about where your school is in that big picture. And what you might want to consider in strengthening that program, that core in your school.

00:05:00

Ms. O'Toole: My expectation is that you're going to leave here with some strategies that can actually be used tomorrow. I've actually brought some materials which I just picked up yesterday from Robious Elementary School where I was principal for ten years, and Robious Middle School which is right next door. So I have some first grade materials and some fourth grade materials and a few middle school materials, and you're going to have a chance to take a gallery walk as part of this. And on top of it all my goal is for us to finish by 12, because I don't like the idea that you'd have to stay late in the afternoon and I think I can do this. If you work with me I think I can do this. Now most of the time we're going to be working today in small groups, and I believe in that because I'm trying to model for you what this model looks like. I'm modeling with you on an adult level with

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

adult materials what this looks like with children, and we're gonna stop at certain points and reflect on how you could apply what we've done to children.

00:06:04

Ms. O'Toole: I will at certain points hold my hand up. I don't have that fabulous music. I was so impressed with that lady yesterday that had all that music. I thought oh that's wonderful, she should be on the Voice. But at any rate I'm gonna hold my hand up at certain points and these people, because I'll put my hand right in front of her face, will see me and eventually people will catch on and that's my signal that I need you to stop and listen to what I'm doing. Okay, the first thing we're going to do, if you open up your packet, pages two through six it's five pages, actually contain a chart that I made. The pages are at the bottom of the, of the pages, a couple of them we turned upside down by mistake but I think you can figure it out. Those five pages contain the chart of what balanced literacy is, what it looks like in terms of its purpose, the instructional focus, each component.

00:07:04

Ms. O'Toole: The materials you would be using, what the teacher is doing during that time and what the students would be doing during that time. So here is what I want you to do, I want you to choose the oldest most experienced educator because I have an affinity for them, 41 years I did this. The oldest most experienced educator is going to come up and pick up a piece of chart paper for your table. This is why it's important that you're sitting by school or school division. And if you've got a couple of schools or school divisions at your table it's fine. But you don't want more than five people or so working on this. And on the chart we've got a blue magic marker, a black magic marker, and a red magic marker. So you are going to, one person, one, one piece of paper per table, you are going to make three rectangles to look like this.

00:08:08

Ms. O'Toole: Okay, and the directions for this if you like to see things up close and personal, the directions for this are on page six. This is called boxing, okay. It's a strategy that came out of the National School Reform Movement, and I'll tell more about that later. But make these three rectangles. In the first rectangle, that's all I want to do for this first part, I want to look over these five pages and just brainstorm with your table in this first frame what is it that you think in reference to this balanced literacy chart is already a strength for you in your school? What's already going very well in relation to this chart? Okay and after you do that we're gonna stop.

00:09:01

Ms. O'Toole: I am only going to give you five minutes to do that, okay? Any questions about what we're going to be doing? Okay appoint somebody, up they come to get the chart paper, and three magic markers. Well I thought about taking this around the

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

tables, but I have a philosophy. And that is if the teacher is ever working harder than the students something is wrong. We know that's not the case, oh and here are the magic markers. Don't forget your magic markers. You want three magic markers one black, one blue and one red. Just a minute. [Tape cuts]

00:10:00

Ms. O'Toole: And when I raise my hand that means you raise your hand so that I know that you heard me or saw me, okay thanks. All we're filling at this point is the outer frame, okay. We're looking over those five pages, no deep intensive analysis. We're looking over and we're asking ourselves which things that are on these five pages are we doing pretty well in our school? We see them as strengths, and all we're doing is jotting those things down. Not one thing, I'm sure it's not just one thing, several things. Which ones do we perceive to be strengths that are on those five pages for our school right now, okay? [Tape cuts]

00:11:00

Ms. O'Toole: Okay thank you very much. At this point I'm going to kind of do a mini lesson related to these five pages on the things I want you to know that aren't on the pieces of paper. So what you may want to think about doing is just jotting any notes, whether you jot them right on this sheet or on another sheet or a post-it or whatever to remind you of some things which we'll need for the second part of this activity. When I started teaching in 1970 I look back in horror now at what I did those first couple of years to children. I had graduated from William and Mary, and I came back to Richmond because I really wanted to do something to help the inner city kids in Richmond. And three weeks before I started my first job Judge Robert Marriage ordered court ordered bussing to hopefully achieve more integration in the public schools in Richmond City.

00:12:03

Ms. O'Toole: At the same time the sixth grade was moved from the elementary school to the middle school because in its wisdom the Richmond Public Schools decided that it was time to implement the middle school concept. So all of the elementary education teachers who had maybe three classes in how to teach were assigned to teach in the sixth grade. There were not books in the school that first year because all the books were still in the elementary school, and in the chaos of all of that happened, all of that happening there just were not books and nobody could seem to figure out how to get us books. The sixth graders didn't take PE, so every day there was no playground, this was the original Armstrong High School if you've ever heard of it, and it had become Benjamin Graves Middle School.

00:13:00

Ms. O'Toole: On Clay Street, Leigh Street a block east of Belvidere right down there where the Bojangles statue and the Maggie Walker house and all that is now, it wasn't

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

any of that then. So at recess I would take my sixth graders out and we would hop on one foot over to Clay, skip up to Broad, run the block from First Street to Adams Street and come back. There was no playground so that was recess. I learned quickly that my children couldn't read very well, and I didn't have a clue what to do about that. My mother was still teaching the fourth grade in another school, so I had always wanted to be a teacher. And I went to my mom and said, you know, help me I don't know what to do. I don't have any books, they can't read, I don't know what to do with them, what do I do? So she gave me some of her fourth grade materials and they couldn't read those.

00:14:00

Ms. O'Toole: By November I was really discouraged. On top of it all my kids came from Mosby Court on Church Hill and they had been bussed to the west end, to the Gilpin Court area where the school was. They had dreamed their whole lives of going to John F. Kennedy High School, and now they were in line to go to Maggie Walker. So they were angry about being picked up out of their neighborhood and taken to a school that they really didn't want to attend, and of course that was happening all across the city. One day after school like many first year teachers, like many 41st year educators I was staying late and I sat in a chair at my desk and I just started crying. And I thought, you know what? I have always wanted to be a teacher, I'm not a good teacher. What am I gonna do? And Mr. Green the custodian who probably didn't finish more than the third or fourth grade came in and said, Mrs. O'Toole what's wrong?

00:15:04

Ms. O'Toole: And I said, Mr. Green I don't belong here. I don't know how to help the kids I, I've never even seen a black kid with red hair and freckles until I started this job. I really, this is not, I just don't belong here. And he said, Mrs. O'Toole here is a thing, you've seen the other side of the fence and most of these kids haven't seen beyond Belvidere Street. You need to take them to the other side of the fence and they need you to do that, this from this man who was, didn't finish third or fourth grade. Well it was enough on the drive home with every block that passed, every right light I got more and more determined, and I said you know what? Those kids aren't gonna beat me, I'm going in there tomorrow and I'm going to show them who is in charge. So the next day I went in and I said, you know, I know it's November 21st but this is the first day of school. Here are my three rules. You don't talk when I'm talking.

00:16:01

Ms. O'Toole: You don't go to the pencil sharpener when I'm talking. You raise your hand when you have something to say, I mean that, those were priorities for me okay. I said, and here is a thing, you break those rules you're not going down the office because you know and I know nothing happens down there. You are going next doors to Mr. Graham's room. Mr. Graham was an elderly African American gentleman who wore this immaculate black suit and a black bowtie every day. There was never a peep in his

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

room. From the time the children came in until the time they left, basically all they did all day long was copy spelling words. Works for me, so the first kid that misbehaved off they went to Mr. Graham's room. And when, I deliberately made sure we'd walk by on the way to lunch, we'd walk by on the way to recess, we'd walk by on the way to, and everybody looked in and watched their colleague in misery copying these spelling words.

00:17:04

Ms. O'Toole: It was the end of my discipline problems. But two months later in January I said to myself, you know what? You don't know what you're doing, you have got to learn more about how to teach these kids to read and write, and I entered that program at VCU. And within two years I was the school's reading specialist working with the 75 weakest kids, imagine that sixth, seventh and eighth grades. And then became an area reading specialist and the supervisor of reading and English for the school system because I double, double majored in English also at William and Mary. And after 19 years one day work up and said, you know what? I think I'd just like to try something different and went to Chesterfield in December of 1989, and stayed there in the K-12 supervisory role for reading and English until my 11 year old son, who is now 33 just turned 33 a couple days ago, contracted cancer.

00:18:02

Ms. O'Toole: My only child, and it hit me I've got to be near children. I've spent most of my career, 13 years so far teaching teachers how to teach. I need to be around some children because I don't know exactly what's gonna happen here. He came through it with flying colors, he had something called Burkitt's Lymphoma, which is very rare, and is doing well. A father of two children now, but as I moved from the central office to school I thought, you know what? I think I like being a principal. When I was in this other job I had no authority what so ever. I could just persuade, I was a salesman. I persuaded people to do what was right, but you know what? As a principal once and a while I had to say I need this done. I need this done in an hour, I'll come back. It better be done. I didn't have to do that very often because I had learned how to get people to do what I want them to do through persuasion okay. Now I just wanted to give you that little bit of background.

00:19:02

Ms. O'Toole: Let's take a look at this document. I just want to highlight a few things for you. Most of it is self-explanatory, somewhere around 1990 there was a shift from teaching reading as a set of discreet skills, the main idea, the author's purpose, drawing conclusions, the main idea can occur at the beginning of the paragraph, at the end of the paragraph, in the middle of the paragraph or it can be implied, well that was a tricky one. How do you teach them how to do that? We shifted from that to strategy instruction, and the people who were instrumental in doing that were Ellen Keen and

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

Susan Zimmermann who wrote this book *Mosaic of Thought*, which is a great book study if your faculty is moving in this direction but it's kind of new for them. And soon thereafter Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis who wrote *Strategies that Work*.

00:20:01

Ms. O'Toole: This book is just a great professional resource, particularly if you teach grades three through eight. There is another book that I lent out, I don't have it here, which is great for primary teachers, K, one and two, called *Reading with Meaning* and it's by Debbie Miller. I have, you don't have to worry about writing these down, see I am a teacher. The last couple of pages of my handout, pages 22, 23, 24 I have all these books listed for you and I'm gonna be sharing some more. So we moved from skills instruction to strategy instruction, from teacher centered instruction to student-centered instruction, and in reading and at the same time growth was occurring in writing with people like Nancy Atwell to the workshop approach. And the workshop approach was kind of based on, on Dr. Hunter.

00:21:01

Ms. O'Toole: What was her first name help me? Madeline, Dr. Madeline Hunter the teacher directs the instruction for short shot, came to be called a mini lesson. The children have guided practice where the teacher is going around observing how everybody is getting it, giving a little coaching. Then the children have independent practice to cement their learning, and then the piece that was added much later debriefing and reflection. Because we've learned in talking and studying about the brain that that reflection piece where I'm thinking about what I learned today and how I can use it, and how it applies and what questions I have, that's really where learning is cemented. So that approach you see here used in the reading workshop, the writing workshop and the words workshop. All together you need to commit in your school to two to two and a half hours of language arts instruction each day.

00:22:03

Ms. O'Toole: I have to tell you I am appalled, and I don't use a word like that very often, when I visit schools at the number of schools that just don't even teach writing except at the SOL grades. That is an extraordinary mistake. Think about your own children when they were young, kids learn to scribble and write the letter of their first name long before they learn to read. And any good kindergarten and first grade teacher will tell you that by looking at a child's writing, I'm not talking about copying things off the board. I'm talking about organic from my heart writing that starts from pictures and moves to scribbles and moves to beginning sounds, and then ending sounds, and then some middle sounds, and then finally something that an adult can read, that tells a teacher what to do in teaching reading. So if you don't get anything else out of what I'm saying today I hope if your school isn't, doesn't have an active 45 minutes to 60 minutes a day writing

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

workshop every single day, every single grade that you will take that back as something you need to think about in your school.

00:23:15

Ms. O'Toole: Because guess what? It will improve the reading achievement, not just the writing achievement. See there are two important question that we, that kids need to ask. The big question in analyzing text is four words, how do you know? Here is your opinion, how do you know? Show me in the text how you came up with that inference, show me. How do you know? And the big question six words in writing is, why did the author do that? Five words, why did the author do that, six words. And the answers connect reading and writing to those questions. So basically in teaching the comprehensions strategies, cause my reading workshop I could be teaching a comprehension strategy.

00:24:09

Ms. O'Toole: I could be doing something on fluency. I could be doing something on procedures for maintaining your reading notebook. I mean the, the array is limitless. But basically I'm going to use the same text, it could be fiction, could be non-fiction to model for the kids what I want them to learn. And let's say I wanted them to learn about inferences, and I love this, I love Cynthia Rylant she's from West Virginia, but she could have been from Virginia. I mean she's got that southern thing. So I would start if I'm working on making inferences, and I would read the first couple of pages. And then I would say to them, when it says right here they had an old station wagon that smelled like a real car, and in it they put an ice chest full of soda pop, and some crackers, and some bologna sandwiches and up they came from Virginia I would say to them a think aloud, I know that these folks probably weren't very wealthy.

00:25:08

Ms. O'Toole: Because number one they had an old station wagon, number two they were eating bologna sandwiches rather than going out to restaurant, so I'm doing, I'm modeling for them by doing a think aloud. And I would continue that way through the book and then I might give them for guided practice some actual real life, two or three inferences and ask them to think about how did you, what did you need to know to draw that conclusion, to make that inference? And we'd talk about that, and then I'd give them an independent practice. Now it would take two or three weeks of working on inferences for most of them to get it. I'd be using a variety of texts, sometimes I would go back to the same text. Sometimes I wouldn't get through the whole text, it could be something relating to social studies, it could be something relating to literature. But the deal is I'm using well-written text to model for them what good readers do.

00:26:07

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

Ms. O'Toole: Okay, now with the writing piece the, the word study piece I'm not gonna talk too much about that except to say that in Chesterfield we use Words Their Way, do you know that? Donald Bear, and I don't think you have to use Words Their Way you can use whatever your school decides to use. Open Court is fine, but the deal is everybody in the school, everybody in the school system really should use the same order for teaching those phonetic elements. Because then when kids move a little bit they don't have any gaps. The last thing I want to say before I'm going to put you back to work is relating to the writing workshop. I have to share this with you. I picked up some materials yesterday from the teachers at Robious Elementary and Robious middle.

00:27:03

Ms. O'Toole: And I, I, this is a fourth grader's writing notebook, and, and you're gonna have a chance in a little while to come do a gallery walk and look at these things I brought. But this was hysterical. This is a fourth grade boy Zach, and he says the five, I guess in the beginning of the year she had them write the five best things that have happened to me. And the five worst, so the five best are making the travel soccer team, winning a gold medal in swimming, getting my dog Rider, and going camping with a couple of other families. The five worst throwing up, being sick on my dad's birthday, getting a scar on my elbow, hitting someone with my metal baseball bat by mistake in the eye. Now, this is what I really loved. Apparently she asked them think big, and I'm sure she modeled this knowing this teacher, think big. Think of questions you have about the world you live in age nine listen to his questions

00:28:03

Ms. O'Toole: They are so typical nine-year-old boy. What will I look like when I grow up? Are there aliens? Is there another solar system? How many people win the lottery every month? When were my ancestors' birthdays? What age will I live to? How many years will Earth be here? How many people live in the world? How long has the Earth been here? What's the most disgusting thing in the world? How much money does the richest person in the world have? How many people have braces? Who is the person who invented the first word? And who has the world's record for chewing gum the longest? I mean see what we're trying to do here is create a community of readers and writers.

00:29:03

Ms. O'Toole: And this young man I'm sure shared, if he was invited to and hopefully shared with his classmates the list he came up with. And that's what creates lifelong readers and writers, creating a community of learners where kids work together in teams and pairs and individually, and the teacher is not the center of the focus. All right, what I want you to do now in that second, the middle frame is to go back again and look at these five pages, and think about through discussion, jot down in that middle frame what are some areas in light of that chart that we need to strengthen to provide an even

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

better balanced literacy initiative in our school? Okay and I'll give you about five minutes.

00:30:00

Ms. O'Toole: ...[Tape cuts] Now what I would like you to do in the center space is either come up with one sentence that is a synthesis of what your group perceives to be they have learned, or it can be a graphic of some type, an illustration. And after you have done that I would like to ask you to post your chart on either wall. And you know, if you would consider it I think it would be helpful somewhere on the chart, maybe near the top put your school or school division. Because it just might be interesting to see how it looks across the state, okay. And I'm going to give you ten minutes to do this.

00:31:00

Ms. O'Toole: ...Yes let me repeat it one more time, this is where it would be good to have a PowerPoint. Although if you again look at those directions for doing the boxing it's there too, but what I'm asking you to do is in that center box on your chart either come up with a one sentence synthesis of what your group perceives balanced literacy to be, or an illustration or graphic that shows what it is. Okay, and you know, we're not Michelangelo here, and nor are we, you know, the world's great writers. So just come up with something that doesn't take too much effort, and we'll post them on that wall. Okay, put your school division's name or your school's name if you'd consider it at the top.

00:32:00

Ms. O'Toole: ...I'd like you to finish up your charts so that we can move on, and I want to just mention a couple of things that Rick thought might be helpful to you. Number one is guided reading. I'll use appalled for the second time, but I'm not quite as appalled but I'm just semi-appalled at the number of schools I visit where at the primary grades children are leaving their home based teacher and going to another person to receive language arts instruction because they are grouped by achievement level.

00:33:04

Ms. O'Toole: That's really not a best practice for young children, and the reason of course people are doing that is because they are trying to hone in on the needs of the children. But you know and I know if you've seen that in your school or in other schools putting all the slow kids together is not a way to lift up anybody. Everybody benefits by being in this community, the classroom where we have a variety of reading achievement levels. Now the flipside of that is of course you have to be dedicated to guided reading, to small group instruction in reading. And if that typically in the schools I'm visiting where they've got the kids changing classes, six year olds going to somebody else to learn how to read, they're not doing any guided reading. Guided reading needs to be happening every single day.

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

00:34:02

Ms. O'Toole: It should take place over a 30-minute period, and all of this is in this chart if you want to look at it. It should take place in about a 30-minute period of time. The teacher is trying to meet with two groups during that 30 minutes, the weakest kids are seeing her every single day. The other groups, there might be four groups; the other groups are seeing her every other day. Out in the classroom what the kids are doing is something to practice the strategy or what the teacher did in the mini-lesson. Or they're reading independently. I am astonished at how many schools I go to and the kids aren't doing any reading, I mean independent enjoyment reading. I'm not talking about reading out of some BASAL some story about somebody I don't care about and wasn't well written to start with. I'm talking about reading.

00:35:00

Ms. O'Toole: Creating a community of learners where kids are saying to other kids you really need to read a Wrinkle in Time it's awesome. That's the power of building a community of readers and writers, they're not out there, I was in a classroom in a school a month or so ago and it was second grade, and I guess the teacher thought she was doing a good thing. She had them in centers while she was working in the guided reading. But they were doing things like putting magnetic letters on a cookie sheet. They were in the second grade they knew the letters of the alphabet, why are we working on things they already have mastered when there is a whole world out there waiting for them. So they need to be, while the teacher is in guided reading, reading with two groups in that 30-minute period of time the kids are either working on applying independently the strategy the teacher modeled. Or they're reading independently, they might be doing something on the computer that has them apply the strategy.

00:36:04

Ms. O'Toole: Okay, but basically they're doing authentic meaningful things, they are not using worksheets. I was at Robious Elementary for ten years, and by the fifth year this is gonna be hard for you to believe we didn't use any worksheets for any subject. Any worksheets, okay. All right, the other piece that Rick asked me to talk about a little bit was the writing. Writing is my number one passion. I love writing, I loved it as a kid. And I, I love it as an adult I still write a lot. I keep a journal. I think one of the mistakes that sometimes we make is saying that teaching writing is you write in your journal every day, just write whatever you want to write. Well you know what happens when they do that, today we had pizza for lunch. Yesterday we had tater tots, tomorrow I hope we have more pizza.

00:37:02

Ms. O'Toole: I mean there is no quality. What you want is to use models, the answer in writing, write this, write across the top of that yellow piece of paper model, model, model, model. That's the answer in getting excellent writing instruction. You can use a

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

student, I mean a well-written child's book. You can use another student's well-written piece from like a former year. You can use yourself have written. Basically you're taking them through the writing process, the pre-writing, the drafting, the revising, the publishing. The most important of all of those, which, what do you think is the most important of all of those processes? The pre-writing because if you don't do that right that's what you're gonna get, here is what you're gonna get from them, what?

00:38:00

Ms. O'Toole: I don't know what to write about. If you overdo the pre-writing you won't have the problem of I don't know what to write about. So you call up an experience that you had, you are going to show them through like a four block, you know what I'm talking about when is ay like a quadrant, a four block what you would do at the beginning of your piece, the middle of your piece, the end of the piece, and I've got some examples. When you do your gallery walk you'll be able to actually see some, some writing in first grade, fourth grade and seventh grade. You're going to stop at points and ask them guys just look at what Mark wrote; it's just so awesome his beginning. Your mini-lessons are going to be on various stages of writing, now here is your answer. You don't need a writing program; you don't need a separate writing program. The only thing that many schools use these days is something called six plus one traits of writing, have you ever heard of it?

00:39:03

Ms. O'Toole: This program by Ruth Culham, this, this is, this is all I would need to teach writing in grades three, four and five. This book is for grades three, four and five, she has one for the primary grades, and there is one for the middle school. They are on that list, her last name is Culham, Culham, C-U-L-H-A-M. And on that list also which is really awesome she has an accompanying book called picture books that go along with each of these ages. So those can be used as your springboard for eliciting the ideas for the pre-writing okay. I find it takes about two weeks for anybody grades two and up to work their way through a writing piece. Kindergarten and first grade teachers you know the kids are not going to be writing on the same thing for two weeks. You know, when I'm done I'm done.

00:40:00

Ms. O'Toole: And that's fine, that's right where they are. But here is what you should expect by the end of kindergarten you ought to see children, and again I'm not talking about handwriting, I'm not talking about copying, I'm not talking about sentence starters, I'm not talking about filling in the blanks, I'm talking about authentic from the heart writing. By the end of kindergarten you ought to see several sentences with beginning and ending sounds, not spelled correctly but you as a, a master teacher can kind of figure out what they've written. By the end of first grade you ought to see about a page and a half. And by third grade you ought to see a page and a half on regular standard

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

paper. Beyond that I, I would go in and do demonstration lessons at Robious and before that at A.M. Davis which is more a blue collar school. And I told the fifth graders you're going to be writing two pages. I don't care what everybody else is doing. You're going to be doing it right, and the vast majority of our students had advanced scores.

00:41:01

Ms. O'Toole: You know, 99 percent passes, the vast majority had advanced scores. So I'm happy to, I can't talk about that but so much because we've got too much else to do, but a good starting place is to look at those sources. Okay, thank you for your work on this. The next thing I want to do is to give you some tips, and then we're gonna come back, gonna come back to the four As. I'm gonna change a little bit so I'll finish. Look if you will at page nine, and I'm gonna basically show you some resources at this point. How many of you are in a leadership position either at the central level or in your school? And really you know what every hand ought to be up here, because you're a teacher you're in the most powerful leadership position.

00:42:00

Ms. O'Toole: The first thing I would do to improve the instruction in reading and writing in this state is to make it very clear that my goal is to create a community of learners who like to read and like to write. Not people who can just pass tests. We are on such, we are on the wrong track. Go back and ask some kids what's your favorite subject. When I first went to Robious Elementary as the principal in 2001, I did that. I asked the kid what's your favorite subject, and what do you think they said? They didn't say recess, although I'm sure they were thinking that but this was a principal they were speaking to. What do you think they said? Math, because we did have some manipulative and there was some engagement. When I left, I know you're gonna find that hard to believe but every single child in that school K through five, you know, when I asked them, you know, of all the things we do all day what do you like the most?

00:43:03

Ms. O'Toole: They said, writing. So we want to create children who love to read and love to write. And we don't want to miss the opportunity; there are not a lot of 30 year olds out here in Short Pump reading When the Relatives Came. We want children to get these books when it's just the right age for them to get them. Okay, all right I've talked about number two so I'm not gonna talk about that. If you don't feel a little bit overwhelmed by this model you either don't understand it or you're perfect. Okay, you can't do all of this next year. You cannot do all of this. I saw a word on a chart over here, fidelity. See I'm not talking about you give a training and then you say, now if you want to use it you go ahead and use it and if you don't that's fine too.

00:44:01

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

Ms. O'Toole: Are you kidding? What about the kids in the classes where the people decide this is too much work I'm not doing this? You give good professional training, given sometimes by teachers for teachers. You have them observe each other in classrooms. You give the support, you give the coaching and then you hold them to it. It takes about three years I find to implement all of this with fidelity, and teachers, your staff needs to be in, need to be involved in deciding the order in which they would do things. I've worked with a school where I mean the teachers are wonderful there. They're very compassionate but there are a lot of things that they're not doing because it's just not a part of the program, and one is writing instruction. But right now writing instruction is not their number one need; their number one need is getting children to read independently. Because you know what we're kidding ourselves.

00:45:01

Ms. O'Toole: You know this. If we say now tonight I want you to read 20 to 30 minutes independently. I had a hard time making that happen in my home, did you with your children? I mean they had it, I don't know why but it's just tough. I remember saying to Brendon when he was in the second grade look if you do this I'll take you and three friends to Kings Dominion. I mean I was, I was desperate I would do anything because I knew it was important. And finally I wrote [Ms. Chewning ?] his second grade teacher and I said, [Ms. Chewning ?] I mean it's like a battle. All he wants to do is play basketball and so I can't get him to do this reading. And she said, and I thought she was gonna say well that's very important you've got to do reading every night. That's part of our program. She wrote back and she said, let it go. He's reading 30 minutes independently every single day in school, and I thought phew, I can talk about the fun things with him. So let the teachers be involved in that, in that middle graph that you created.

00:46:02

Ms. O'Toole: Let the teachers be involved in deciding where to start, because it's all important. It's all important. None of this is negotiable. All right, well I talked about number four. Now look at the daily instructional schedule, page 16. It took me a number of years working with a committee of teachers to get the daily instructional schedule, we call it the master schedule although any of you that work in middle and high school think it's quite funny to call it that in elementary school. But the daily schedule is critical in terms of establishing priorities, and I want you to notice just two things about this daily schedule. The first is the reading workshop and the writing workshop times are delineated.

00:47:00

Ms. O'Toole: At first I had it just language arts, but guess what I found. People either didn't get to the writing, or they didn't get to the reading, and you know, we had some really great teachers as your schools do. And they love to hear themselves talk, and so

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

they would ramble on and on with these mini-lessons for 45 minutes instead of 15 or 20 minutes. The kids never got to do the independent reading, I just didn't have time for that. So that concept of having a separate time for reading and a separate time for writing, and those time blocks that you see on that balanced literacy chart, we stuck to that. And I have to tell you I mean I would walk up and down the halls and if writing was supposed to go on and it wasn't going on I would say, did we switch writing and social studies today? When are we doing the writing? Because the children need it. It's the right, it's the best practice of what's right for children. The other thing on that instructional chart I want you to notice is reading and writing are not always offered in the morning.

00:48:07

Ms. O'Toole: And that's because at Robious Elementary we were very committed and still are committed to collaborative instruction. The special educators who primarily work with LD are, collab. with, with the regular Ed. teacher. And so they couldn't, they couldn't be everywhere from 9:30 to 11:30 in the morning. So we just made a conscious decision that the younger children, the more immature children, the children who are beginning literacy learning will have theirs in the morning. And the older children, the fourth and fifth graders, will have theirs in the afternoon. Not to say that those LD teachers wouldn't pull kids out who were having difficulty and needed some intensive instruction. Not to say that the reading specialist wasn't having to be a part of this in scheduling also with your tier two and tier three kids.

00:49:00

Ms. O'Toole: But bottom line is every LD child in that school benefited from collaborative learning, and again it's, it was our philosophy that we all are in the same community. We all benefit from being around some advanced learners. Only, only group that wasn't true for was some of our autistic children, those that had not learned to speak, that could not speak were not, were not in the collab. program. And the last thing I just want to mention on that schedule is the Morning Meeting Book, do you know, do you know about Morning Meeting? Buy this book, it's, it's the simplest easiest thing. This is not a language arts thing I'm telling you about right now. It's a behavior thing. I wanted to raise my hand yesterday and say do you know about Morning Meeting Book? Twenty to twenty-five minutes at the beginning of every day the children in each classroom sit in a circle.

00:50:04

Ms. O'Toole: The morning meeting has several parts, a greeting, which might be a funny handshake. A, an activity, which can be anything from socializing to something related to academics that we're studying. And it ends with a reading, usually an inspirational reading, age five through and our middle school uses it also, so through age fourteen. This transforms over night student behavior. It transforms it over night. It

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

sounds very odd doesn't it, but you know, you'd be amazed at how many kids in your class, in a class don't still know the names of everybody in the class. We are creating a community of learners. We started this at Robious Elementary in 2005 as a part of being an Expeditionary Learning School.

00:51:04

Ms. O'Toole: Expeditionary Learning is an inquiry based approach, instead of telling the kids we're going to study the Civil War and here is what you need to know we create mystery photographs, and maps, and letters, and diaries and they figure out the clues to figure out what we're doing. The morning meeting transformed student behavior. And honestly at that school, if you know anything about that school not a lot, I used to go home and say, my husband would say got any good war stories? I'd say, are you kidding? The only thing I got was gossiping about who doesn't have a new dress yesterday. But if you've not familiar with this consider it. The next thing I want you to see on page 17, very quickly, is just a lesson plan format. If you haven't figured it out already this is a very organic approach. This is not a scripted approach. You can't buy a program that tells you every single day what to do in a balanced literacy model.

00:52:06

Ms. O'Toole: You know what? That's a good thing. Where did we go wrong in thinking teachers aren't smart enough to be decision makers, and to figure out what children need? Teaching is the highest calling other than maybe being a minister that exists on this planet. We need to believe that teachers are smart enough to craft excellent instruction for children. And then the pages after that for those of you who are administrators, pages 18, 19 and 20, that's an observation tool that Chesterfield uses and they gave me permission to share it with you. So that administrators, my goal here was that administrators would know what it is they should be looking for when they observe balanced instruction, balanced literacy. All right.

00:53:02

Ms. O'Toole: I think I've really discussed six, the one thing you need in addition to some of these professional books that I've mentioned, the one thing you need to make this work is level readers in the classroom. The last time we adopted reading textbooks, which was I think maybe 2004 in Chesterfield, I wrote a proposal, I was on the committee. And, and didn't vote for any of the programs, but I was, I wrote a proposal with the support of our faculty to take the money that would be used to buy the books for our school and buy leveled readers to create a school wide book room and a small core to get started for each teacher. And it was \$40,000 and of course it had approval all the way up until the superintendent who said, what do you think he said?

00:54:02

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

Ms. O'Toole: Not so sure I want a school doing something different from the other schools, and I said, we are already 99 percent passing these tests. I promise you if you let me do what I know is right we will double the rate of pass advanced in reading and writing. And you know it's Anne O'Toole you're talking to, I know what I'm talking about. Give me this chance, and he did. I don't think he was too thrilled with it, and worried about what would happen politically but it worked and sure enough we did double. And it wasn't my idea it's what, it's what the research says is the right thing for children. I've included number eight, some four or five excellent excellent free websites. You don't really need a teacher's guide in this approach. You just need some great professional books, just a few that you can address through book studies over time.

00:55:04

Ms. O'Toole: And then these websites, which cover everything from the reading to the writing. If you don't have a school wide literacy committee in your school I think it's something you might want to consider. Typically it might be chaired by the reading specialist if that person is a very influential person with the staff. But see what you want to do is you want to create ownership and leadership among the teachers. This is not doing to them, it's they are in charge, just like with the kids. It's constructing upward rather than telling downward. And I think that's it. Cause the rest of it is kind of self-explanatory. Okay, now what I'd like you to do is turn if you will to page, I don't know if you can even see it, page seven the four A text protocol.

00:56:04

Ms. O'Toole: While you're doing that let me, let's debrief just a second. The protocol we used here called boxing how could that be used with children? Who has got an idea? How could that be used with children? It's just like KWL, what I know, what I want to know, what I've learned. It's another form of that. So it's a, it's a, a way to have them make meaning of a text, to determine importance in text okay. Anybody else? All right, I think that's probably the, the best use for it. Now with this four As protocol I'm asking you to go back to what you've been thinking about with this balanced literacy chart, and in this protocol you do the first block first.

00:57:03

Ms. O'Toole: So you go around each person speaks one at a time, and they answer the question what assumptions does the author of the text, the text being the balanced literacy model, what assumptions does the text hold? And each person takes turn and just answers in one sentence, and then you go to the next one, what do you agree with that's here? And then the third one, what do you want to argue with? What, what do you anticipate teachers would, would argue with in what's here? And what do you want to aspire to? So aspire to is kind of related to that second frame that you had in boxing okay? All right, I'm going to give you about six minutes to do that, appoint one person,

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

this time let's let it be the youngest person, the least experienced in the field of education at your table and have them start.

00:58:02

Ms. O'Toole: Start with assumptions and go through the four blocks, okay? We're just processing again what we've learned. [Tape cuts] So Rick asked me Anne if you had to say the top five things you'd do to help a struggling reader what would they be? Number one is I would make sure that they are reading leveled readers in small group instruction that are at their reading level, their instructional reading level. Number two is I would make sure that they are reading every single day. Number three is I would make sure they are participating in mini-lessons that are challenging even if they perceive they're over their head. Number four is I'd make sure that they are writing every day as well as reading every day.

00:59:01

Ms. O'Toole: And number five, I would have an extraordinary commitment to small group instruction within the classroom. I'm just not a big believer that you're gonna do something totally different with children who are struggling. I don't think that makes sense. I think and this is not what the state department of education thinks but that's great about being retired, I don't answer to anybody. I think if you do the best that we know to do for children and you give them materials that are on their level and the teacher is modeling over and over and over you will create a community of learners where children begin to like reading and like writing. And once that happens the power doesn't stop. See we've forgotten about the peer pressure, you know, kids want to do what other kids who are achieving do.

01:00:03

Ms. O'Toole: And when you put all the weak kids together I just don't, I mean I, I did it a long time and I did that too sometimes, and I just never saw the results from it. This young man back here asked a good question, he said well what about something like grammar? I mean you said you never used worksheets, but you know, grammar is a skill and they need it. And you are so right, and you know the standard educator answer, well the grammar sentences should come from what they write. But I think you have to think reality about a teacher's time, and if I'm trying to teach kids how to make subjects and verbs agree I'm going to do a mini-lesson on that. I might use some sentences that I've pulled from some of their pieces, but if I want them to have some independent practice I'm not gonna spend an hour looking through their writings to find ten more sentences for them to practice on. I'm going to find something I can use that's fast.

01:01:00

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

Ms. O'Toole: Because there is a difference, and I hope you're taking this away, there is a difference between a skill and a strategy okay. They've got to learn certain skills, they've got to learn them in a certain order, phonics is like that, grammar is like that. Strategies are much more recursive. They learn these same strategies in reading and writing through the 12th grade. If you mess up it won't really matter that much cause you're gonna come back and do it again, and somebody after you is gonna do it again. It's, it's not something that's so black and white, okay. I know that probably makes some of you very uncomfortable but that's the way it is, okay. What I think I'm going to do, I want you to have a chance to walk around and do this gallery walk. I told the young man that asked me the question about the grammar, sir what was your name, who asked me, what's your name? Greg?

01:02:00

Ms. O'Toole: Greg, I should have said to Greg the power of an anchor chart is what kids use after you've taught mini-lesson on a strategy or a skill like subject-verb agreement you record and you can do it with the class tips that will help them remember the learning, capture the learning. And so I've put up some anchor charts from this, this area is first grade, this table in the wall, fourth grade, and I, fourth grade over there and even some seventh grade. And I have some fourth grade writing folders, reading notebooks, you'll, you'll see it when you get here. I also want you to take a minute if you can and just look at the work that you created on the boxing charts. You don't have to because if you're like, yes?

01:03:00

Ms. O'Toole: Hi. You can probably guess what I think about it, and here is why, here is why I'm opposed to it and I have to say that, you know, we had 36 elementary schools in Chesterfield and we were the only one that--

Ms. O'Toole: I'm so glad you asked that question, Robious was the only school in Chesterfield that did not departmentalize in grades four and five. We did for mathematics because we offered accelerated mathematics in grades four and five, but we didn't for science, social studies and language arts. And here is why, once kids get to about the third grade level in reading you can use science and social studies to teach reading and writing. That's why I've always been opposed to a BASAL reader.

01:04:02

Ms. O'Toole: Not that it's not great for kids to read a story about Paul Bunyan and his cow named Blue, but how wonderful for them to read authentic text, chapter books and even primary sources, and you'll see some of that up here, in their Virginia studies, in their science program, and that's what becomes the basis, the content for some of their reading workshops and writing workshops. If my children are going somewhere else for science and social studies I can't capture that. Plus it does, it gives me, it gives me a way to spend enough time on science and social studies, there is not enough time. If I

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

had to do a BASAL reader, every story in a BASAL reader and then do science and social studies I'd have to resort to this is the stuff you need to learn for the test we're taking in three months. That's not the way you want to teach. That's not the way, that's not the best practice.

01:05:01

Ms. O'Toole: Okay, does that answer? Okay, now we're gonna take a gallery walk. I think what we're gonna do because I really am very committed to your having lunch at 12, I had planned to end with a conversation café, and the procedure for that is in this packet. All these procedures are things you can adapt with kids, where you choose a question. I had planned on putting the questions on tag board, on the tables until I realized there were 100 tables. So basically you choose a question, and for kids it could be things like why did the main character choose her actions in the book? I mean it can literature related, it can be content related, and basically everybody who is there discussing that question is there because they want to be, because they want to be. So it's a conversation answering that question, and people take turns answering.

01:06:03

Ms. O'Toole: And then they have a discussion about it, and then they have one sentence at the end where they've summarized what they've learned. We're not gonna do that today, but I would like to do the gallery walk. Before we do the gallery walk in the last eight minutes we have are there any other burning questions that I can help you with?... I don't, I don't, except that you know, I can only tell you what, what I know and that is all of them used block scheduling every other day. Language arts is 90 minutes two, two 45 minute periods that are back to back. So that basically the reading workshop and the writing workshop are still what they follow in English classes.

01:07:00

Ms. O'Toole: But I really don't, I really, I've never done scheduling at secondary. Any other questions? All right I'm gonna read a quote to you then I'm gonna give you the opportunity to look at these things I've brought. This is from Mosaic of Thought, the book I mentioned. What do better performance and higher achievement really mean? Do higher standardized test scores necessarily equate to either? Are we comfortable with classrooms where students follow directions, complete assignments, and sit at literacy centers doing activities but aren't asked to read broadly and think deeply? Do we believe that the skills that matter most in a complicated interdependent world are those that can be tested in a multiple-choice format? Are we certain that students are actually doing the one thing that makes the biggest difference in their reading performance, spending extended periods of time every day actually reading.

01:08:02

Questions and Solutions: The Problem-Solving Process and Interventions for a Continuum of Services

Ms. O'Toole: Skill and drill one size fits all programs which are increasingly prevalent are an illusory solution. Evaluating programs over the past 40 years shows that package referrals simply do not seem to reliably improve student achievement. Valuable resources that could be used to improve school and classroom libraries, decrease class size, redesign the school day for productive academic work and real reading, and provide effective staff development to teachers are being squandered on tests and costly materials that too often don't make any difference at all for children. Just something to think about. So I hope you'll have a chance now, take an opportunity. I really want you to look at the anchor charts and the student materials that I just picked up yesterday.

01:09:00

Ms. O'Toole: And thank you very much for coming.